Domestic Violence

By Brenda Branson

C:\Users\Owner\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.IE5\B1AGNZ2R\MC900411488[1].wmfWhy do abused women often stay, rather than just flee the situation?

Few people will ask, "What's wrong with that man? Is he in jail? Does she need medical help, financial assistance, or legal aid? Unfortunately, the first question that comes to mind is, "Why doesn't she just leave?" When we ask that question first, we lose sight of the criminal and the crime and begin to place blame on the victim.

The fact is that many women do leave, and risk their lives doing so. However, those who choose to stay may do so for the following reasons:

**Confusion-** One day he worships her and places her on a pedestal. The next day she falls from grace. It is a long fall, and she can't understand why he has changed from a loving, generous husband into a bully who delights in punishing her. A day or two later, he places her back on the pedestal and turns on the charm. This emotional up-and-down strategy keeps her off-balance and in a state of confusion.

**Fear-** She has every reason to be afraid. He has threatened to take the children away from her if she leaves, and she knows he will do it. He will lie in court and testify that she is not a good mother. In extreme cases, he will kill her and the children. "If I can't have you and the kids, then I'll make sure no one else will either."

**Need to protect abuser-**Some women feel guilty for betraying the abuser. She believes he needs extra love and care because he has been wounded in the past. She feels it is her responsibility to help him become whole.

**Disassociation from the pain-**The abuser convinces her that the violence wasn't as bad as she claims, or that it didn't happen at all. Sometimes he accuses her of hitting him, even though she is the one with the bruises. Her body feels the pain, and she knows she has been hurt, but her mind tells her it really wasn't that bad — ignore it — he won't do it again — he promised to change.

**No Options-**Most women face extreme financial, social, and emotional hardships when they leave and often find limited or no help available to them.

These are just a few of the reasons why women stay. The real question is, "What can we do to help?" and "How can we make the violence stop?" Let's stop blaming the victim and begin holding the abuser accountable!